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## Social Media Marketing Plan for A New Fashion Business Targeting Women University Professors

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**Social Media Marketing Plan for A New Fashion Business Targeting Women University**

**Professors**

by

**Huanjiao Dong**

A creative component submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE**

Major: Journalism and Mass Communication

Program of Study Committee:  
Dr. Gang Han, Major Professor  
Dr. Laura Witzling  
Dr. Douglas Smith

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this creative component. The Graduate College will ensure this creative component is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2021

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**ABSTRACT**

The primary objective of this creative component is to investigate the factors that influence the purchasing habits of women university professors. According to the findings of the interviews, the second goal of this project is to create a social media marketing strategy that will be implemented. Results of this study will be helpful for understanding women university professors' dress preferences in higher education institutions. This creative component project will also be helpful in creating marketing strategies for a new fashion company that will target women university professors in the future.

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Women University Professors, Apparel, Retail

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In the past, women accounted for a smaller proportion of university professors and administrators in the U.S., compared with males (Parker, 2015). Since the establishment of United States Higher Education institutions in early 1800s, men tend to hold more professorship and university management positions than women (Parker, 2015). Development of the economy and society's expectation towards women also impacted fluctuations in women's participation rate in higher education (Parker, 2015). Women leaders are more likely to display a contrasting combination of both feminine and male traits, and stereotypes regarding the integrity and credibility of males and females influence the leadership options available to women (Eagly, 2005).

Appearance involves personal appearance and beauty, hairstyle, clothes, and also the use of objects (Jung & Yoon, 2011; Kueh & Bagul, 2013). Physical characteristics such as height, hair, bright eyes, and a symmetrical face and body are core predictors of physical attractiveness, accounting for approximately 60% of its meaning (Elmer & Houran, 2008). Situational influences, such as societal norms, account for approximately 25% of physical beauty; interpersonal, family experience, psychology, and personal traits account for approximately 10%; and character traits account for a small amount of approximately 5% (Elmer & Houran, 2008).

Clothing has the potential to alter behavior and affect the judgements of others based on characteristics such as strength, dynamism, and the quality of one's thought process (Johnson et al., 2014). Dress can be applied to express identity, and people use dress as a sign or visual symbol to communicate a variety of identities (Johnson et al., 2002). For professional women, there are societal expectations regarding dress, as clothing transmits information about cultural

norms, cultural knowledge, values, and behavioral norms (Johnson et al., 2002). In academia, professors' clothing can be considered as an alternative tool to educate students, colleagues, and the public (Blakeslee, 2012). Professors' clothing choices can reveal values, identities, and knowledge (Blakeslee, 2012). Therefore, understanding the ways in which women university professors utilize dress is of great importance.

The growing popularity of the Internet and social media websites provide opportunities to online advertisers and marketers. Many customers engage more with social media, in which purchasing decisions are influenced (Song, 2016). Consumer's social activity also had been greatly affected by social networking. Customers are influenced by social network ads on their decision to buy online (Akar, 2015). They often utilize social media in order to discover new connections, develop new opportunities, or exchange thoughts or experiences (Astuti & Susanto, 2020). Social network marketing has increased in popularity as a digital networking medium, as well as having a major effect on marketing communication (Astuti & Susanto, 2020).

Social media marketing is a sequence of activities in which a brand utilizes more than one or less than one social network for advertising and product or service promotion, as well as participating in an organization's social networking strategy (Barefoot & Szabo 2010). Social media programs are an essential part of the content marketing initiatives (Barefoot & Szabo 2010). The diverse advantages of social network ads remain attractive to advertisers (Barefoot & Szabo 2010).

### **Problem Statement**

For this study, women university professors were chosen as the principal focus because of their unique role and contributions to higher education. Today, women earn the majority of all college degrees with significant gains in attaining teaching titles within higher education.

However, they often occupy the lowest-paid and least-senior administrative positions (Whitford, 2020). When women leaders ascend to leadership positions, institutional structures, systems, and mindsets pose significant challenges; however, at all levels, administrators remain visible role models inside and outside of the institutions, they serve. While previous researchers have studied teachers' use of dress codes and what their clothing communicates to others (Shoulders et al., 2017; Workman & Freeburg, 2010), majority of the studies focused on K-12 elementary educators. Previous researchers have noted the significance of dress within different career paths (Maran et al., 2021; Ndeke & Barmao, 2021), however, the purpose of this project was to study the dress choices and messages women university professors believed their clothing communicated to those within and outside of their institution. It is our goal to provide this information for aspiring women university professors.

### **Purpose Statement**

The first goal of this project is to examine factors influencing women university professors' shopping behaviors. The second purpose of this project is to develop a social media marketing plan based on the results from the interviews. The findings of this project will be useful for understanding women's leadership and academic dress in educational institutions. This creative component project will also be useful for developing marketing plans for new clothing brand targeting women university professors.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Dress and Women**

Dress refers to the tangible objects associated with our body (Kasier, 1997). Dress can be considered a collection of material objects that reflect consumers' values (Banister & Hogg, 2004). In the professional role, teachers are expected to transmit community norms, cultural knowledge, values, and behavioral norms to the students they serve (Atkinson, 2008). Therefore, understanding dress code is of great important for teachers, especially college administrators. Dress codes for teachers are related to the appearance of role embracement (Workman & Freeburg, 2010). A perception of teachers' engagement with their role is important to schools' public image (Workman & Freeburg, 2010).

### **Leadership and Power**

Contemporary studies of dress for success literature related to women and higher education leadership suggested the “glass ceiling” and the “chilly climate” are concepts that still exist and are widely experienced (McCormick et al., 2003). An article about *Helping Women Dress to Impress in the Workplace* on *Liverpool Daily Echo*, emphasizing that appearance shows a meaningful role in the workplace. It is essential to dress for success no matter when you are going to the job interview or want to leave a perfect first impression, or you want to show a professional manner in the workplace (Cowley, 2012).

Leadership at academic institutions continues particularly difficult due to the variety of partners with diverse expectations, and growing cynicism by others about the value of colleges and universities (Gigliotti et al., 2020). An awareness of and respect for communication dynamics remains a critical component of any formal or informal program aimed at improving

the leadership potential of graduate students, prospective faculty, and administrators (Gigliotti et al., 2020).

Power can be considered to be an individual's capability to affect states of others by providing or withholding resources (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002). When trying to achieve desired goals, power will have the capability to control or affect others (Weitz, 2001). In retailing settings, power can be considered as one of the most ubiquitous forces (Rucker, Galinsky, & Dubois, 2012). Guy and Banim (2000) mentioned that females saw themselves as consciously engaged in making representations that mirrored their identities and noticed that women might use their clothes to put in or represent changes in their images. Wearing what one likes to wear may have a strong impact on an individual's choices (Damhorst, Miller-Spillman, & Michelman, 2005). When talking about power and clothing consumption, consumers who have low sense of power will have high value on products and prefer conspicuous consumption that can present their social status to others (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008). In a study related to consumption of fashion and career women, power dressing is considered as a strategic mode of self-presentation (Entwistle, 2000). The dress advice within this study mentioned that a trouser suit or skirt can be a good choice for professional women to present themselves (Entwistle, 2000).

### **Status Symbol**

Goffman (1951) mentioned that a status symbol has categorical significance as it helps us identify our social status. It also has expressive significance as people can express the point of view, the style of life, and the cultural values in his or her social position (Goffman, 1951). There are two important status symbols: occupation symbols and class symbols (Goffman, 1951). Accordingly, college administrators' clothing can be considered as class symbol, that is because

they can present their social class through it. People can also use dress to communicate information to others. People can not only use dress to obtain recognition and distinction and but also present their success and social status to significant others. People who want to wear specific dress is because they consider this dress as symbolizing status symbol. Participants want to enhance their social standing through purchasing this dress that can symbolize status either for themselves or significant others.

### **Social Identity**

Social identity outlines person's feelings of identification, which is essential to motivation and engagement (Tsai & Bagozzi, 2014). A significant component of personal identification is a shared understanding of who we are with other individuals. There is another significant component of personal identity that we have with other people, which is a collective identity (Tsai & Bagozzi, 2014). In the organization, dress functioned as a helpful window through which members could see and understand the many social identities that were intrinsic to their organization (Johnson et al., 2008). Dress may also be used as a means of communication and has played an important part in the formation of individual identities (Johnson et al., 2008). Women who care about what to wear always build and manage identities through the wardrobe (Guy & Banim, 2000).

### **Media Effects**

Media effects are the cultural, social, and psychological influences communicated through mass media (Bryant & Oliver, 2009). The effectiveness of media messages on audience members can be determined by various factors, including audience demographics and psychological characteristics (Bryant & Oliver, 2009). Valkenburg and Peter (2013) introduced three types of indirect effects, including media use as a mediator, media response

states as mediators, and media effects as mediators. Media effects as mediators occur when, during individuals' use of social media, their quality of friendship can be enhanced through intimate self-disclosure through this second-order media effect (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013). The media provides plenty of examples on how to dress for success as a teacher. For instance, on Pinterest, people can find tips for how to dress for an interview, how to create a capsule wardrobe, and many other useful tips for dressing for success. On Twitter and Instagram, there's an account called Stylish Academic. This account focuses on women and men from academics who love style and fashion.

### **Role Theory**

Role can be defined as the position of which an individual was taken in the social environment (Biddle & Thomas, 1966). Role plays the functions of presenting status, shaping behaviors, and acquiring desirable information to present the role (Biddle & Thomas, 1966). In Turner's (1962) research, the author emphasized the importance of role theory, and conducted comparison between process and conformity. Solomon (1983) stated that individuals at their early career stage tends to be consistent with role dress expectations, that is the employees will follow the dress code rules from the company. After individuals become more familiar and experience with the working environment, they will be more comfortable to discover additional role appearance (Solomon, 1983). Therefore, role theory will be used to in this research for better understanding the transition and changing role of women university professors' dress code.

### CHAPTER 3. DATA COLLECTION

For the aim of recruiting prospective participants, a purposive, snowball intentional sampling technique was employed (Cresswell, 2009). Snowball sampling strategy is useful for building initial trustworthiness as those prospective participants are the members that are from the initial participants' community (Cresswell & Clark, 2011). In snowball sampling, initial participants and or investigator's acquaintances will suggest prospective participants, such as acquaintances, friends or other suitable participants to the investigator (Cresswell & Clark, 2011).

At the introduction of the interview, the researcher clearly described the goal, significance, advantages, and disadvantages of participating in this study. The researcher also outlined the role of confidentiality. Participants were notified that there will be no benefits to join this study. Participants were told that they had the option to withdraw their consent to participate at any point throughout the interview. In addition, the participants were informed that the whole procedure would be documented and that no personal identifying information about them would be shared with anybody. The pilot study was conducted in a major Midwestern university. This pilot interview was conducted to check for question clarity and to reveal any additional questions that would be beneficial to the study. In order to participate in the pilot phase of the research, at least two women professors were selected at random from a pool of prospective volunteers. The interviews were scheduled to take about one hour. After the pilot study, the investigator listened to the audio recording and checked interview questions to see if changes need to be made.

This study received IRB Approval (see Appendix B). Semi-structured interviews with 36 women university professors at a large, Midwestern, land-grant institution were conducted,

which meet minimum requirement of fifteen interview participants for a more in detailed analysis of interview participants' interest and perspectives (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

The interviews ranged from 35 to 90 minutes and averaged 60 minutes.

## CHAPTER 4. DATA ANALYSIS

Nvivo was applied for analyzing the interview data. All the interview transcripts transcribed, and all the interview transcripts were imported to Nvivo to analyze the data. The data was first organized into a codebook, which served as a guide for the subsequent analysis. Credibility, transferability, and confirmability were considered when researchers evaluate qualitative findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). After all the interviews were completed, participants were asked to participate in member checks. To ensure that the transcripts are accurate and trustworthy, member verification is performed. To guarantee uniformity and correctness, all the interview transcripts were shared to the participants for their review. To determine the credibility of my findings, the researcher provided data and results to five volunteers who were then asked to evaluate whether my research was accurate. Collaboration can be considered as the process of which researcher finds at least another one trained co-researcher to help with forming research questions, collecting, and analyzing data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). When creating the codebook, two trained coders worked together on the same ten interviews first, to examine validity.

After all the interviews were transcribed, all the interviews were shared with the participants for evaluation and editing. Inductive coding was used in open and axial coding. Inter-coder reliability check revealed 95% agreement. Several key themes related to dress choices and meanings of their clothes as women administrators emerged. Pseudonym names are used in this study,

## **CHAPTER 5. INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PLAN**

### **Situation Analysis**

A situation analysis can be defined as systematically collecting and analyzing historical and existing data to identify trends, factors as well as situations that will have the ability to impact business performance and to select proper approaches (Chaffey & Smith, 2017).

In order to cope with the rapid development of the online marketing market, a new social media marketing plan needs to be developed for this new business. A long-term online marketing strategy plan can not only clarify the marketing ideas of the company, but also help with the development of the store. The continuous growth of performance provides a practical guide for operation. Through developing social media marketing plan, we will analyze current situation of target customers, analyze partners and competitors that may be encountered in the future.

### **Demographics**

The business strategy focuses on college town female college administrators who want to pay less for the apparel but also care about high quality and versatility. The demographic characteristics of this marketing are well-educated, professional women, over 30 years old, have middle or high-income, work as faculty or staff in higher education. The psychographic characteristics are women who work hard as women administrators at higher education institutions, but also enjoy different lifestyles. These types of female consumers are concerned about the appearance of professional dress. These types of female customers consider their apparel as fashionable and socially acceptable. For the sociographic characteristics, the consumers like to join community activities.

## Competitive Analysis

Based on the results from interviews, Academic Fashion Inc.'s major competitors include Chico's and Loft. Chico's first boutique was founded in 1983 in southern Florida (Chico's, n.d.). Later, they designed fabulous looking sweaters that greatly expanded the base of Chico's market (Chico's, n.d.). There are more than 600 Chico's boutiques across the nation, as well as overseas partners (Chico's, n.d.). Loft, first started its business in 1996. It focuses on developing casual styles in the reasonable price points (FashionModelDirectory.com, 2020). Loft's collection was originally a much more relaxed version of that of daily Ann Taylor, and it has expanded itself into company and is now known as a casual lifestyle brand.

**Table 1. Comparative SWOT Analysis**

	<b>Academy Fashion, Inc.</b>	<b>Chico's</b>	<b>Loft</b>
<b>Strengths</b>	Customized Design	Multi-channel strategy	Good Price
	Strong Social Media Presence	Good Quality	Customer Service
	Tailored clothing		Shopping Experience
<b>Weaknesses</b>	Only have one location	Higher Price	Omni-Channel Retailing
	Take longer time to build brand reputation and brand image.	Weak Social Media presence	Weak Social Media presence
	College towns may not attract many customers	Older customers	
<b>Opportunities</b>	No business exists targeting women university administrators.	Adopt technology and open more new markets	Continuously build new product lines
<b>Threats</b>	Lack brand recognition	Limited customer group	Financial Problem

## Marketing Trends

According to the report from Mckinsey (2020), the apparel industry is pressured to become more active in diversity and inclusion by consumers and workers. More organizations will prioritize diversity and inclusion, embed it into the organization, and employ active leadership roles, but their efforts will often face increased criticism in terms of sincerity and performance (Mckinsey, 2020)

According to the report from McKinsey (2020), energy consumption, environmentally harmful, and inefficient are noticeable in the apparel industry. Even though we have seen some improvement, fashion industry has not yet done its part in saving the world. Fashion industry players must abandon platitudes and commercial noise in favor of practical intervention and regulatory enforcement, while still meeting market demand for change initiatives (Mckinsey, 2020).

According to Mckinsey (2020), Because of COVID-19, many fashion brands cancelled in-person fashion shows. Digital fashion show becomes popular. The Covid outbreak, the shut-down of the borders, and the transformation have all highlighted the significance of digital technologies for the fashion industry supply chain, as consumers would continue to want to purchase products, and fashion designers and fashion companies have to include it (Mckinsey, 2020).

Though purchasing apparel hasn't been reduced much in America due to the pandemic, a 70 to 80% fall in McKinsey customer survey data indicate declines for offline and a 40% to 30% increase in online transactions for America, as of April. Online shopping is failing to make up for lost revenue of brick-and—mortar stores. Fashion and beauty brands, though, have been greatly benefited from all the store closures because more

spaces leave them more opportunities to showcase their merchandise, particularly after the closure of existing locations (McKinsey, 2020).

### **Business Profile**

Academy Fashion is a college town-based apparel store. This store sells apparel, shoe, accessory and other fashion items. The store will open its doors in 2021, near college towns at the State of Iowa. Academy Fashion will expand its brick-and-mortar locations near Iowa within ten years. This store will also open its e-commerce operations in 2021. According to the results from the interviews with women university administrators, this stores' top three competitors include Chico, Talbots, and Loft. Academy Fashion is a new women's apparel store for professional lady working at education institutions. Academy Fashion Inc. specializes in clothing that shows the aesthetics of working as an women administrator at higher education institutions. Product lines include lady's coats, jackets, blouses, pants, dress, skirts, dresses, accessories, and shoes. Both staple pieces and trendy pieces will be offered at the store. The store also provides customized clothing design for customers. Customers can choose size, color, and pattern and use the virtual try-on system both in store and online. After customers finish choosing color, size, and pattern online, their design will be sent to the store automatically.

**Table 2. New Business Consumer Segments**

<b>Consumer Types</b>	<b>Platform</b>	<b>Promotional Strategy</b>
Digital users	Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, and Instagram followers	Promotional Links
Social media users	App, website	Promotion information will be shown on the App and website sale section
Online Shoppers	Both online and App consumers	Promotion information will be shown in the email

**Table 3. New Business Customer Profile**

<b>Target Markets</b>	<b>Generation</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Shopping Platform</b>	<b>Product Preference</b>
College town customers	Over 25 years old	Female	Above \$30,000 annually	Undergraduate or above	Online and in-store	Professional attire

## CHAPTER 6. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES

### **Clothing Changes with Career Advancement**

Each of the participants spent many decades within academia or the private sector prior to their current university role. The majority of the women ( $n=36$ ) discussed the subtle and more major style changes that they made as they rose through the ranks from secretary, scientist, assistant professor, to their current role. Janie stated, “As an administrator, there are many, many, many more meetings, you know, with whether it's with the president or with dean's or business professionals and so, yeah, I tend to have to dress more professionally. When I first started at the center, I would pretty much have many days where I would wear shorts or jeans to work. I would never do that today.”

### **Importance of Representing the Office**

Within the university, participants discussed the importance of branding both the institution and their units. Alicia stated, “On campus, you're always visible to everyone....I am representing the program all the time. I think it is important then to dress nicer to have on professional attire.” At the university level, the administrators discussed the vital importance of representing the institution to others outside of the school. Christina shared that when she first started in her role, she attended an event at another school wearing those school's colors; “an administrator made very clear to me that you should wear the school's color, a scarf or something, and you should be representing the institution.....That was a real key moment for me when I realized the people are watching will have certain expectations that appear on the team.”

### **Use Clothing to Fulfill Different Roles**

Participants discussed how they used more formal clothing to demonstrate their administrator roles or dressed more casually to build community with their staff members. Dressing as administrators often meant wearing the school's colors, dressing "like a professional," and wearing power suits. According to Julia, she was summoned into an unexpected meeting with the university's provost during a staff holiday party. She arrived wearing an "ugly holiday sweater" and stated,

"felt very silly going into that [meeting] and embarrassed like I wasn't representing our office as well as I could have or should have. But at the same time....it is so important for the team to see that I participate in the office traditions. I'm willing to forgo the suit or the pencil skirt and wear work slacks to have fun with them."

### **Use Clothing to Communicate**

Participants shared that they used clothing to communicate many different things, such as power, femininity, competence, and university spirit to others. But also used clothing to imbue themselves with certain traits. For example, Kathleen stated,

"I sometimes feel very overdressed but yet I think it's still important to dress up for those things because that's what you do. And that's how you build confidence. I think you do feel better when you dress up more, just how, how I am today with the sweater this and that. If I didn't put a necklace and earrings on, I don't feel nearly as comfortable. Whereas I feel better if I have makeup on my face. If I put, you know, earrings in and accessorize whatever my outfit is."

### **Dressing to Fit into Expectations**

In addition to dressing to fit into the institution and in order to communicate traits and beliefs to others, participants also discussed the need to fit into other societal expectations of age, gender roles, and the political climate of the state. For example, Hebe indicated, "I felt the need to dress up to look older, so that people will take me seriously."

### **Influence of the University President, Family, and the Media**

The wearing of school colors was most attributed to the influence of the school's president. Interviewees mentioned the influence of family members, much more than friends, in giving them advice on what looked appropriate, as well as fashionable. The media, particularly ads generated by style services such as Stitch Fix, politicians such as Nancy Pelosi, and favorite store advertisements and product reviews on Ann Taylor and Banana Republic influenced consumption practices.

### **Influence of Social and Cultural Norms**

Participants shared that during COVID-19 time, they tried diverse styles when they work from home. What they wear during pandemic time isn't what they would wear in the office. They tend to wear casual clothes when they work from home, and they don't feel comfortable sitting in suit coat and sweatpants in front of the computer. They also started to notice what others wear and commented on other administrators' work-from-home clothes. One participant mentioned, "I was just really surprised by this male administrator who generally wears a tie and a dress shirt. He was sitting, like a hooded sweatshirt didn't have the hood up, but you could tell that it's a sweatshirt and so it's just kind of funny."

### **Clothing Changes with Career Advancement**

Women professors mentioned that their clothing changes can be influenced by their positions and disciplines. When they worked as a scientist at the lab, they need to wear closed toed shoes to protect themselves. When they go to conferences, they need to present their identities as a scientist, as well as a professional scholar.

Ally stated, "as a scientist, sometimes or oftentimes we wouldn't be able to wear like open toed shoes, we wouldn't be able to wear shorts or skirts or dresses either. And so almost all the time I would be in jeans, and then likely a nice shirt, or a tank top with a cardigan over it or something like that. Um, I think that what I dress like now is probably more similar to what I would have dressed like when I go to professional conferences as a scientist and so that it's a bit more dressy and maybe more businesslike."

An example from another administrator showed that although she is a program director, she still prefers comfortable casual wear in the office or attending meetings with peers. However, when she attends important presentation, she will try to dress very professionally in front of the public.

Jenn stated, “So today I am wearing a program coordinator outfit that I would have absolutely worn back in the day, wearing blue jeans and like an active wear top, you know kind of a rugby type shirt when I was a program coordinator and I was just kind of in the office or attending meetings with just you know my peers, we tend to be pretty casual wearing jeans and boots, you know kind of thing that was kind of my look. And then if I had a meeting that was important, as I deemed important or if I was going to be giving a public presentation, I would usually wear nice slacks, a nice top blouse, occasionally would wear skirts haven't been wearing skirts much lately. But I would say that my outfit was more casual when I was Program Coordinator than when I became director.”

To help women university administrators find appropriate clothes for appropriate occasions, we need to understand their dress choices based on different occasions. Before helping customers with their shopping trips, customers will be invited to join a survey to help stylists better understand customers’ shopping purpose, career, and dress preferences.

### **Tactic**

On social media, customers will be invited to fill out a stylist guide survey before visiting the store. If they finish the survey before shopping online or in-store, they will get 15% of their next purchase.

### **Importance of Representing the Office and University**

The store will organize events to enhance brand image and provide more opportunities for women university administrators to present themselves on behalf of their offices. The themes of the events can be related to dress for success, show professionalism.

Dannie mentioned that, “There's an expectation that you're a conservative but that you represent your institution. And that you're, you know, more formal and of course as you get older, there's expectation that you're less flamboyant and less flashy is important if

you want people to take you seriously, that your clothes not be the only thing they see when they talk to you.”

### **Tactic**

The store can hold “Dress for Success in Academia” contest. Administrators will wear the fashion items from our store and join the “Dress for Success in Academia” contest by uploading their own photos to Pinterest, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Hashtag #IAAcademicFashion will be used as an easy way for the audiences to search photos and share event information with friends. An online poll will be created to select best photos. The winners will have the chance to showcase the photos on the store website.

### **Influence of Family, Friends, and President**

Social networks can have an impact on the decisions they make while shopping, particularly when it comes to selecting which products and brands (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2009). It is possible that women university professors will turn to other individuals in the reference groups for advice about where to purchase products. They may share their enjoyable shopping experience through shopping at this store. This advice can include apparel products that could bring comfort. After listening to the advice from the reference groups, new customers may show a preference toward university branded apparel. Participants mentioned that their dress preferences can be influenced by colleagues, university president, family, friends, and political leaders.

Jean stated, “When I look at the president of our university, she's always wearing institutional colors the red or gold or red and golden black and some really cute jackets. I will say that she said some, she's bought some really since she's in that role now. She's got some really nice jackets and you know, wears the spins over scarves. And I think I'm certainly dresses very professionally. I've also seen women leaders of universities, like new leaders, really wearing really tight clothes. I saw that last semester. White skirt. never wear a white skirt. wearing a white tight suit is not a good idea for most people. I saw that and really I think it was just, it made the person not taking seriously.”

### **Tactic**

The store could partner with faculty or staff social clubs to hold promotional events at the offline store. This event would increase the number of customers but also but also positively influence customers' attitudes on the store. Those who already purchased at the store before can be served as opinion leaders. The opinion leaders would be faculty or staff who like to use social media and always purchase clothing at this store. The opinion leaders will share shopping advice with reference groups. The opinion leaders will post shopping experience on social media.

### **Subscription Box**

Participants shared their enjoyable experience of using clothing subscription box. This service provides them the opportunity to try different styles. Through the dress advice provided by clothing subscription box service, participants were able to mix and match their styles and build their own professional wardrobe. One of the examples from Merelyn stated,

“I use StichFix and I use Chico's and those are the only two places I shop. I just don't have. I'm not a person who buys a lot of clothes. I'm not a person thinks about clothing. I had the same. The reason I'm using stitch fix, one day, I looked at my closet and realized I was wearing the same clothes. I've been trying to find different. Different styles to put in there. So that's some of the things I try, right now about color. I want to have some more color in my palette. So those kinds of things I'm asking for.”

### **Tactic**

The store can build subscription business model, with loyal users, can increase the revenue of the store by effectively promoting subscription service. Establishing incentives program to encourage users to rejoin their membership or spend money to buy the brand elsewhere. This is a complex task that often requires many different methods to succeed, including user experience, retail incentives, and marketing. The popularity of subscription boxes

can also be attributed to curation and customization, and customers often desire personalization. Before subscribing the box, customers will be invited to conduct detailed questionnaires and lifestyle tests before registering.

### **Online Styling Blogs**

Consumers use Pinterest for multiple purposes. Pinterest can be convenient for searching information about diverse categories of styles and clothing, providing useful styling information, and browsing product information. One of the participants mentioned that Pinterest can be used a substitute for fashion magazines, she can browse different styles online and she does not need to pay subscription fee.

Jeanne mentioned that, "I don't watch TV very often, but I like Pinterest. So that's a fun way for me to just see you. It has different types of styles and clothing. So I would say that's the main way that I think about looking at different clothing. I used to look at more fashion magazines, but I haven't just because I don't have a subscription and when I usually get them is when I'm traveling by airplane, so I haven't done that for a while."

### **Tactic**

An online styling blog can be added on the official website and other social media platforms. Store can hire professional fashion bloggers and invite fashion bloggers write some useful styling tips. The topics of the fashion blogs mainly focus on "dress for success" and "professional wardrobe". Additionally, official social media accounts can forward fashion trend articles from some fashion magazines.

### **Web Design**

Several functions on Instagram will be useful for developing this social media marketing plan. For instance, the customized front page on Instagram enables owners create their own business profile page. In the interviews, some participants mentioned that website design is crucial for online shopping.

When designing a new website for the store, we need to consider how to increase consumers' hedonic and utilitarian motivation through online shopping. When consumers visit the website, they will be invited to join an online game. If they successfully finish 50 percent of the game, they will receive 15% off their next purchase. An online assistant will be set up to help consumers find appropriate information.

The design of this Instagram shopping front page will focus more on the themes of the store. Several pictures related to female professors will be added on the front page. The product tag function can help customers find product information quickly and learn more about the product. On the store Instagram Shop page, this in-app shopping function helps customers discover more products and compare different products.

### **Technology-based Shopping**

Study found that virtual and augmented can be useful for online shopping, some innovative techniques are being employed to improve consumers' ability to view products from diverse angles (Liu et al., 2020). AR or VR could help customers better visualize how the garments would look on virtual people (Liu et al., 2020). Some fashion companies started to use visual reality to present the designs and record the live show in a virtual environment (Liu et al., 2020).

Participant Julia shared her experience when shopping online, stated "I want to see a larger view of the product. And then get back to where I was and not have to start over and go back through the whole thing to get back to that place and keep going. Some of them are like, I want to see this. And then when I click back, then it sends me back to the top and I need to go all the way back through the things I've already passed over to get to the rest. yes, you can enlarge it and you can see the fabric, or you can see it in all the different colors that it's offered in so you get some sense of what it looks like. Some shopping malls already launched virtual fitting services such as Smart Mirror.

### **Tactic**

Consumers who visited the offline store can try the 3D visual try on system, just take or upload a front photo of the face, and the system will use artificial intelligence technology and simulation technology to create a three-dimensional facial model of their own. After everything is completed, customers can also adjust the design according to their own face shape. At the same time, the system will provide a variety of hairstyle options. After customers tried 3D visual try on system, they will be able to get rewards for next purchase. After customers get enough rewards, they can use the rewards to claim some gifts.

The offline store will also implement a visual try on system. In the store, there will be a 3D body scanning machine and a machine for customized clothing design. After customers scan the body measurements using 3D body scanning machine, the data will be imported to the customized design machine. A stylist will assist the customer with choosing their own clothing color, fabric, and style. All the procedures will be designed based on a game-based module. After completing all the games, customers will receive coupons for their next purchase.

At the digital fashion show, product purchase links can be shown at the bottom of the screen. Consumers will be able to learn more about this brand while watching the show, this procedure will be easier for consumers to make a purchase," In addition, a visual pop-up store will be set up at the digital fashion show. Some promotional items will be sold at the online pop-up store.

### **Influence of Cultural and Social Norms**

In the interviews, some participants mentioned how their dress preferences can be influenced by cultural and social norms. Some African American administrators mentioned that African American culture emphasize the significance of presenting professionalism in public.

Therefore, understanding the impact of culture on marketing content is significant for the success of the brand. Brand needs to consider integrate cultural differences and motivations into their communications.

Mary mentioned that, “Culturally, it has been is traditionally in an African American culture. Even no matter how poor you are, that you always go out presentable, you never leave the house messy. In my era you always were come with a cut you need to be dressed up, put together specifically because I think it was their way of combating the ideals around African Americans for less than that you need to fake it till you make it that they were, you know, trifling or they weren't clean or they you know, you didn't you needed to be. It's like everything else in that cultural perspective. You need to run faster, jump higher, be better for people to actually think that you are just regular is how you dress and present yourself. You always need to be coach, you always need to be conscious of how you how you present and so in a cultural way that is very much a part of my decision making about how I show up that I'm going to show up, always picture ready, Because I'm representing not just me, I'm representing the image of my people.”

### **Tactic**

Several cultural events can be held in-store and online monthly. For instance, African American Cultural Appreciation events will be beneficial for attracting customers from diverse cultural groups. Examples of the events can include Hispanic Music Appreciation Month, African American Fashion Month, Asian American and Pacific Island Fashion Month. Customers can invite family and friends to join this event. At the event, several traditional clothing will be presented to the customers. Facebook will the used to stream the live events. Customers will be invited to leave comments on Facebook.

### **Online Sponsored Ads**

Social media can allow consumers to gather around brands and form social groups with common interests and hobbies. The link between brands and consumers is content. In traditional marketing, brands often publish content in catalogs, and the content lacks interest, which makes it difficult to motivate buyers to buy. For the current social network users, they are eager to see

personalized content, they pay attention to the brand, but also to share the content that is worth sharing.

Amy stated, “Mostly like if I'm on Facebook I guess they'll be like sponsored ads that come up. I like those ads. I can't even think of what they're called but like Stitch Fix or there's other things like that they kind of pick styles and show you several pieces that will go together. Looking at those or shoes I feel like that's probably a lot of what I would see or and potentially inference to be do”.

Ads with product tags functions can be used to promote the store’s official webpage. All these functions on Instagram will be useful for increasing the sales and attracting more customers to shop both in-store and online. One of the participants Karen mentioned that she received some interesting ads on social media feeds on shoes. She considers the fun ads offers her more options on shoe shopping. Therefore, when creating ads on social media, online marketers need to examine how interesting and interactive ads can be created to attract consumers attention.

Janna stated, “If I see something that I like, you know, on social media or in a show or something, I might go in Google and look for something like that, like I'm just talking about I really want this skirt. And it's only because I saw a social media post on it on Instagram of someone with a polka dot skirt and oh my gosh, that skirt is so cute. I want that. And so you know, I'll just see somebody else, it's no different than when you're in person, when you see something you like you want it, so you know if I see something I certainly will replicate it. I would definitely do that if something caught my eye and certainly you know the places that know me they they get my style in my shopping cart and then they will be on my on my social media accounts just to try and get me to kind of tip the tidbit into you know purchase the things that I had sitting in my cart or that are sitting there and like maybe save for later. So yes, I absolutely will, if I see something that's cute or catches my eye I will click on the link”

### **Tactic**

Facebook and Instagram Sponsored Ads will be used to promote Academy Fashion brand and future events. Customers who click sponsored ads will have the chance to get additional discounts. Sponsored ads will be designed based on online shopping preferences.

### **Online Community**

Some participants mentioned that wearing school apparel can present their identities and play important roles in the community. When women university professors wear university outfits, their appearance will become very recognizable, wearing school uniform can help them express identities. Women university professors can communicate their identities as university administrators and an important individual within the community. Wear university clothing also indicated to others that their appearance can represent the institution. When women university professors wear the school uniform and share their enjoyable purchase experience with other people within the community, it is possible that after having conversations with loyal customers within the community, individuals' purchase intentions toward the product might be enhanced.

### **Tactic**

For offline store, several events will be held for women university administrators who have used customized clothing service design before. After they used customized clothing design service, they can use hashtag and share their enjoyable experience online.

### **Influencer Shopping**

There are three different mechanisms that may affect attitude: Internalization, identification, and compliance (Kelman, 1958). Internalization is characterized as the acceptance of socially acceptable behavior that is compatible with an individual's belief framework and objectives (Kelman, 1958). If an individual considers information provided by others, such as product reviews, as potentially beneficial for saving money, then internalization may happen. Compliance, defined by Kelman (1958) as a change in behavior, reflects the social influence underlying subjective norms, often expressed as expectations from significant others. Sometimes, in order to be main friendship, people are inclined to

synchronize their behaviors with their friends (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Kandel, 1978). Similarly, it is possible that consumers may purchase a fashion product because their online acquaintances convey this expectation to them (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Identification refers to an influential person, such as celebrity's influence on individuals' attitudes or behaviors (Kelman, 1958). People choose to use Facebook is because he or she wants to keep connection with their friends with whom they share common values and interests (Sánchez, Cortijo, & Javed, 2014).

### **Tactic**

The store can use influential person strategy, which including collaborate with fashion influencers share their enjoyable shopping experience on social media. Fashion influencers will post review videos on social media. Fashion influencers will post product link and coupon code online.

### **eWOM Strategy**

Electronic word-of-mouth happens when consumers leave negative or positive online reviews toward the product they purchased before (Levy & Gvili, 2015). The popularity of social media has made consumers to become more inclined to use these more recently developed and unknown products and names to talk about them (Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). eWOM is good for this purpose because it is a source of information on customers' social and personal relationships, as well as of their success, with regard to the product (Cox, 1967). Online consumer ratings have been critical in eWOM communications (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). Social networking networks like Facebook and Twitter can be useful platforms for eWOM.

### **Tactic**

For the online store, a chat or web forum environment can be developed in order to enable anyone who want to know more about the product to interact and to post questions and exchange information. This environment can enhance the engagement with the fashion items. New customers can also connect with the customers who purchased this fashion items before and ask their opinions about this product. Customers who made purchase through online store and posted their authentic reviews on the website, they will receive a small reward. After customers post more than 10 reviews on the website, they will receive \$5 off toward next purchase.

## CHAPTER 7. IMPLICATIONS

In order to attract consumers to purchase the products, fashion retailers should find techniques to enhance social influence. For instance, an online social shopping environment can be created for consumers to shop together and share their enjoyable shopping experience. Moreover, important referents such as family or friends, can be considered as an important factor for purchasing new products. Thus, social media, such as Facebook or Instagram are good places to post product information and enhance social influence among important referents. Third, consumers may purchase this new brand under social pressure. If consumers are aware purchasing this product is a benefit for the environment or have social meaning, then they are more likely to purchase this product.

Findings revealed that women university professors used clothing to establish their diverse roles and identities in the office and university. Women university professors also considered how they were perceived by others and how they could better represent both themselves and their institutions through clothing. Findings revealed the needs of targeting women university professors when developing marketing strategies for college town consumers. Online and in-store customized styling service can be designed to attract women university administrators. Future studies can compare the differences between male and female administrators in clothing choices and purchase decisions.

The findings from this creative component emphasized that mass media, opinion leaders play a critical role in adopting new technology. In our interviews, the participants also mentioned social media can influence their decision-making. Some of them obtain product information through social media. Also, the finding about the important role of opinion leaders also is consistent with the interview results that opinions from peers can influence their purchase

intentions toward professional dress. Therefore, retailers can use social media to enhance consumers' purchase intention toward professional dress.

Although the number of organizations using social media marketing has gradually increased, there are still many problems. For example, in many organizations, the goals of social media marketing are not compatible with the goals of the company, and marketers believe that they have used social media data to optimize marketing strategies, and they do not believe that this will affect the overall strategy. There is still a lack of adequate and complete tools to manage and measure social media marketing activities. These problems have yet to be resolved in practice.

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## APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Life History

- What is your position?
- How long have you been in your current position?
- Please describe your career path.

### Professional Ideal Images

- How has your manner or style of dressing changed over your career? From assistant professor to now?
- How has your manner or style of dressing changed since becoming an administrator?
- Describe your process for selecting clothing to purchase. Do you favor certain stores?
- Describe your process for selecting clothing to wear each day.
- How do you communicate your identity through your clothing choices?

### Influence of Dress on Work

- Do others comment upon your clothing and appearance? What do you think when someone comments on your clothing?
- What sort of image do you try to convey with your clothing?
- Do you consciously balance the decision to look powerful? Feminine?

### Influence of Media and Significant Others

- How media (traditional and social media) influence your work dress choice? Examples.
- How your families or friends influence your work dress choice? Examples.

### Identity

- How has ethnic identity shaped your clothing selection?
- How has your gender identity shaped your clothing selections?

**APPENDIX B. APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH (IRB)**

**Institutional Review Board**  
 Office for Responsible Research  
 Vice President for Research  
 2420 Lincoln Way, Suite 202  
 Ames, Iowa 50014  
 515 294-4566

**Date:** 12/20/2019  
**To:** Huanjiao Dong  
**From:** Office for Responsible Research  
**Title:** **Women University Administrators: Dress Choices and Meaning**  
**IRB ID:** 19-506  
**Submission Type:** Initial Submission **Exemption Date:** 12/20/2019

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The project referenced above has been declared exempt from most requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.104 or 21 CFR 56.104 because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

2018 - 2 (iii): Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) when the information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a LIMITED IRB REVIEW to [determine there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain confidentiality of the data].

2018 - 3 (i.C): Research involving benign behavioral interventions in conjunction with the collection of information from an adult subject through verbal or written responses or audiovisual recording when the subject prospectively agrees to the intervention and information collection and the information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a LIMITED IRB REVIEW to [determine that there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain confidentiality of the data]. - 3 (ii) If research involves deception, it is prospectively authorized by the subject.

The determination of exemption means that:

- **You do not need to submit an application for continuing review. Instead, you will receive a request for a brief status update every three years. The status update is intended to verify that the study is still ongoing.**

- **You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application.** Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any *modifications to the research procedures* (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, nature or duration of behavioral interventions, use of deception, etc.), any change in *privacy or confidentiality protections*, modifications that result in the *inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations*, removing plans for informing participants about the study, any *change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants*, and/or any change such that the revised procedures do not fall into one or more of the [regulatory exemption categories](#). The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.
- All **changes to key personnel** must receive prior approval.
- **Promptly inform the IRB of any addition of or change in federal funding for this study.** Approval of the protocol referenced above applies only to funding sources that are specifically identified in the corresponding IRB application.

**Detailed information about requirements for submitting modifications for exempt research can be found on our [website](#).** For modifications that require prior approval, an amendment to the most recent IRB application must be submitted in IRBManager. A determination of exemption or approval from the IRB must be granted before implementing the proposed changes.

Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

Additionally:

- All research involving human participants must be submitted for IRB review. **Only the IRB or its designees may make the determination of exemption**, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.
- **Please inform the IRB if the Principal Investigator and/or Supervising Investigator end their role or involvement with the project** with sufficient time to allow an alternate PI/Supervising Investigator to assume oversight responsibility. Projects must have an [eligible PI](#) to remain open.
- **Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected [adverse experiences](#) involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other [unanticipated problems](#) involving risks to subjects or others.**
- **Approval from other entities may also be needed.** For example, access to data from private records (e.g., student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. **An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.**
- Your research study may be subject to [post-approval monitoring](#) by Iowa State University's Office for **Responsible Research**. In some cases, it may also be subject to formal audit or inspection by federal agencies and study sponsors.

- Upon completion of the project, transfer of IRB oversight to another IRB, or departure of the PI and/or Supervising Investigator, please initiate a Project Closure in IRBManager to officially close the project. For information on instances when a study may be closed, please refer to the [IRB Study Closure Policy](#).

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or [IRB@iastate.edu](mailto:IRB@iastate.edu).

APPENDIX C. VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN EXAMPLES



Figure 1. Brand Logo Design



Figure 2. Visual Design Example 1

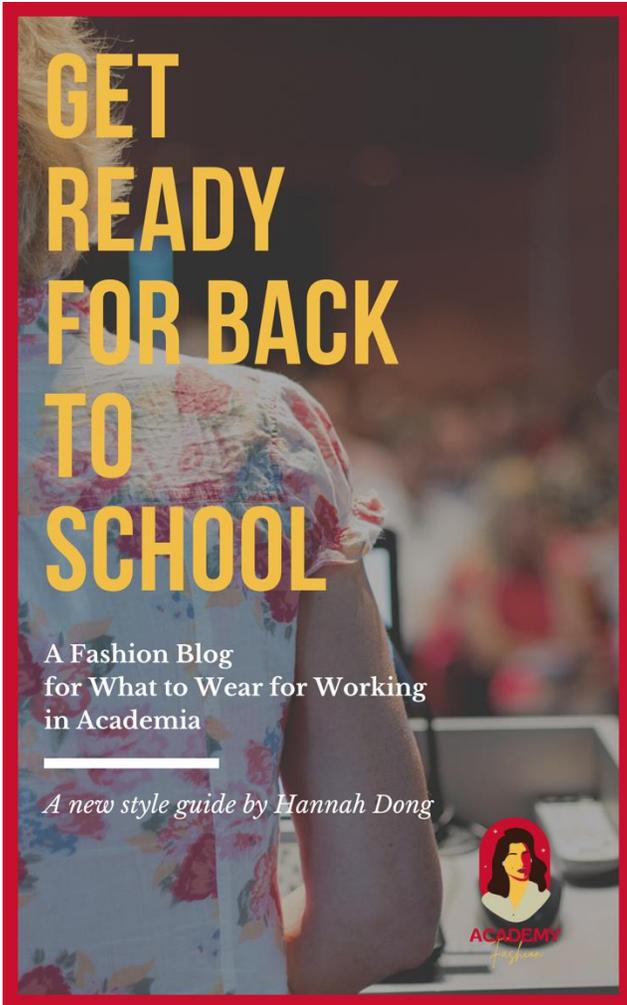


Figure 3. Visual Design Example 2



Figure 4. Visual Design Example 3

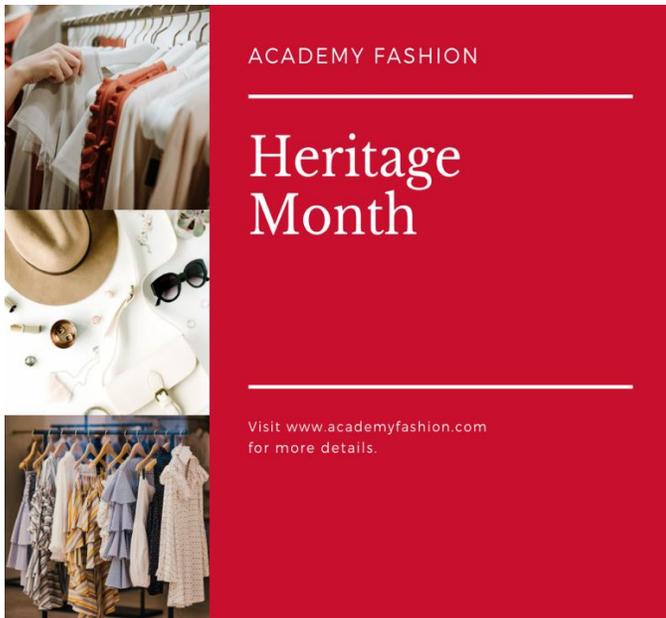


Figure 5. Visual Design Example 4